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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, MOPS, PINS, CB

SUBJECT: CURRENT CAMBODIAN SITUATION

FOR BRUCE KRESSLER

1. THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS, AMPLY SUPPLIED BY CHINA AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, LAUNCHED THEIR THIRD DRY SEASON (DECEMBER-JULY) OFFENSIVE ON JANUARY 1, 1975. THRUSTING FROM THE NW, NE AND SE WITH ELEMENTS OF APPROXIMATELY 20,000 TROOPS, THE COMMUNISTS MADE SOME INITIAL ADVANCES, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY WERE PUSHED BACK AT POINTS EAST AND SOUTH-WEST OF THE CAPITAL. AT THE SAME TIME AND ELEMENTS OF SOME 10,000 COMMUNIST TROOPS ATTACKED GOVERNMENT DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ALONG THE MEKONG RIVER WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF CLOSING THE RIVER AND DENYING BULK RE-SUPPLY OF FOOD AND WAR MATERIEL. THE COMMUNISTS SUCCEEDED IN CLOSING THE

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RIVER BY EARLY FEBRUARY NECESSITATING RESUPPLY OF THE

CAPITAL BY AIRLIFT. MUCH OF THE SUBSEQUENT FIGHTING HAS CENTERED ALONG THE MEKONG, SOUTHEAST OF PHNOM PENH, AS THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO REINFORCE POSITIONS AND REOPEN THE RIVER. AFTER SOME WEEKS OF RELATIVE INACTIVITY ON ALL FRONTS, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE INITIATED ATTACKS NORTHEAST OF THE CAPITAL PERMITTING THEM TO ROCKET THE CENTER OF THE CAPITAL. WEST OF THE CAPITAL, COMMUNIST FORCES HAVE ALSO

EXERTED PRESSURE ON THE DEFENSE PERIMETER IN AN EFFORT TO INTERDICT THE AIRPORT AND CUT OFF VITAL RESUPPLY EFFORTS. WHILE DRAMATIC, THESE FORCES HAVE FAILED, AND THE AIRPORT REMAINS OPEN. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN SOME ACTIVITY IN OTHER PROVINCIAL AREAS, BOTH SIDES HAVE CONCENTRATED AVAILABLE COMBAT TROOPS IN THE CAPITAL AREA. TOTAL GOVERNMENT CASUALTIES FOR THE MONTHS OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY ARE IN EXCESS OF 20,000 KILLED AND WOUNDED. COMMUNIST LOSSES ARE BELIEVED TO BE GREATER. GIVEN ADEQUATE LOGISTICS SUPPORT THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT FORCES ARE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO HOLD THEIR POSITIONS UNTIL THE RAINY SEASON BEGINS AND LARGE SCALE FIGHTING EASES. WITH THE ONSET OF THE RAINY SEASON, THE MEKONG WILL FLOOD MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BLOCK. GOVERNMENT RESUPPLY AND OPERATIONS WILL BECOME EASIER.

2. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS REMAINS CRITICAL. THOUGH FOOD STOCKS IN THE CAPITAL ARE CURRENTLY ADEQUATE AND SUPPLIES OF FOOD AND MEDICINES ARE BEING INCREASED BY AIR, INFLATION IS RAMPANT WITH A PRE-DICTABLE IMPACT UPON CIVILIANS, REFUGEES AND MILITARY ALIKE. EFFORTS TO EXPAND FOOD PRODUCTION AND TO EMPLOY SOME OF THE MANY THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES HAVE BEEN TOTALLY HALTED BY THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE.

3. THE INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS CALM DESPITE THE WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION, WAR WEARINESS, INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING OF PHNOM PENH AND SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES OF PRO-COMMUNIST AGENTS IN SOME PROVINCE CAPITALS. THERE ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL TRY TO COUPLE MILITARY PRESSURE WITH INTERNAL SUBVERSION IN ORDER TO UNDERMINE GOVERNMENT CONTROL IN THE CAPITAL AND OTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROVINCIAL AREAS. THESE EFFORTS WOULD OF COURSE BE AIDED AND ABETTED BY CUTOFF IN SUPPLIES FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

4. PRESIDENT LON NOL TOLD AN AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION MARCH 1 THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO MAKE ANY PERSONAL SACRIFICE TO ACHIEVE PEACE FOR HIS COUNTRY. PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET HAS AMPLIFIED THIS, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, AND STATED THAT RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT OR ANY OTHER

MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ONLY TAKE PLACE IF NEGOTIATIONS WERE ASSURED. THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BE EAGER FOR NEGOTIATIONS. THE USG CONTINUES ITS POSITION OF SUPPORTING TALKS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND AN EARLY COMPROMISE SOLUTION. THE ADMINISTRATION IS CONTINUING ITS EFFORTS TO GET CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR FURTHER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IN ORDER THAT THE GKR MAY CONTINUE ITS DEFENSE OF THE COUNTRY, AND TO STIMULATE THE KHMER COMMUNISTS TO AGREE TO NEGOTIATE. INGERSOLL

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